



New Multi-media General Permit for Auto Salvage Yards to be established by DES in 2009

A change in state law in 2008 requires DES to establish general permits for auto salvage yards and auto crushers. The general permits, which will be established through the administrative rulemaking process, will contain terms and conditions for the regulation of all aspects of the operations to assure protection of environmental quality and compliance with existing environmental regulations. This includes requirements for managing fluids, including gasoline, oil, antifreeze and other regulated substances, as well as requirements for managing solid waste, hazardous waste, universal waste, refrigerants and other potential air pollutants, and other regulated substances, materials, and waste.

The auto salvage industry is the leading recycling industry in the United States, responsible for recycling between 75% and 85% of the material content of end-of-life vehicles, by weight. This contributes significantly toward conserving natural resources and reducing the demand for landfill space.

However, poorly operated auto salvage yards and crushers can have a serious adverse impact on environmental quality. Auto salvage yards and crushers handle many types of fluids, including gasoline, oils, anti-freeze, and solvents. Each of these has the potential to contaminate the environment if not properly handled. In addition, motor vehicles contain many other hazardous materials, including mercury in light switches, ABS brake systems, and head lights; acutely toxic sodium azide in air bag cartridges; lead in wheel weights and lead acid batteries; and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in air conditioning systems. Auto salvage yards and crushers are ultimately responsible for knowing how to properly manage each of these materials. The quality of their work is critical to protecting our environment, public health, and safety.

In New Hampshire, there are over 150 auto salvage yards handling tens of thousands of vehicles annually and there are a number of auto crushers operating throughout the state. Many yards and crushers are doing a good job complying with environmental protection requirements. However, over 25% of the auto salvage yards in this state are known to have caused groundwater contamination and an even larger percentage has other environmental compliance issues.

The new general permits will improve the way DES currently regulates the auto salvage industry and the agency's compliance assurance efforts. At present, at least nine different DES programs and corresponding sets of administrative rules apply to various aspects of salvaging and crushing end-of-life motor vehicles. By consolidating all of those existing regulatory requirements into one place under the terms and conditions of a General Permit, DES will be able to provide more consistency and improve efficiencies in its efforts to assure facilities are complying with environmental protection requirements.

After the general permits are established by rule sometime in 2009, auto salvage yard owners and crusher operators will be required to register to use the permits as applicable. Registration is free. For auto salvage yards, the owner will have to provide information about the facility location and operation, a copy of the facility's local license, and either a signed statement certifying compliance with the terms and conditions of the general permit or a proposed plan and schedule for achieving compliance within a reasonable time. For auto crushers, the registration process will be similar.

For additional information about the General Permit, contact the DES Green Yards Program at nhgreennyards@des.nh.gov.